

September 24th, 2019

To: Members of the House Judiciary Committee
From: Tanisha Moir, LMSW CAADC
Subject: Support for Clean Slate Legislation Bill Package

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of the Clean Slate Legislation Bill Package, which would make criminal record expungements automatic for all people who are eligible for them.

I am a person in long term recovery from substance use disorders, and an active member of the National Association of Social Workers, Michigan Chapter- Addiction and Recovery Workgroup. A Workgroup that focuses on improving the well-being of those with substance use disorders and of those in recovery.

The years I spent as an actively using addict are the catalyst for my current lifestyle, belief system and professional zeal. They are the primary motivation for my pursuit of a career in social work and the behavioral healthcare field. There is no way that I would have been able to affect a personal transformation without the help and guidance of counselors, social workers, the legal system and other recovering people. The priceless outcomes of these experiences include empathy and the desire to serve and reshape my community as a provider of services to people with co-occurring substance use/mental health disorders.

On August 23, 1996 I pled guilty to the charge of possession of a controlled substance under 25 grams, was placed on probation and required to obtain substance abuse treatment services. Then on September 5, 1997, I was found guilty of violating probation on the aforementioned sentence. In addition to the felony charge, from 1995 - 2000 I accumulated a number of drug and morality related misdemeanor charges and convictions in Wayne County.

The circumstances surrounding each legal infraction are a direct result of grossly impaired reasoning ability due to chemical dependence; during that time, the obsession and compulsion to use was the overriding focus of my life. There are not now, nor have there ever been charges levied against me for felonious criminal sexual conduct, crimes against children or any violent offense.

This period illustrates the depths to which I descended in my addiction: criminality, homelessness, desperation and despair. Prior to 1995, I had never received so much as a jaywalking ticket, nor have I had any criminal charges or convictions since my recovery from chemical dependence began on December 6, 2001. Every illegal act I committed represents an attempt to secure more drugs. I have, unfortunately, had one traffic ticket in 2010.

My entrance into recovery included the full continuum of care: detoxification, residential and outpatient treatment, as well as residence in a women's three-quarter house. Without this foundation, I would have been unable to achieve the level of success and freedom that I now

enjoy. I completed all probationary requirements and graduated from Drug Treatment Court on September 26, 2002. It was during this period that I gained the impetus to devote my professional and educational life to understanding the causes of interpersonal dysfunction as well as developing skills in professional intervention.

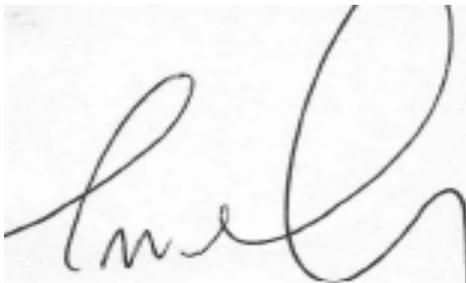
However, even though I had the opportunity to enter recovery, my criminal background still remains. There are plenty of other examples of individuals like me who have paid their debt to society but were not able to enter in to a secure professional job. The shame associated with having a criminal background and the social stigma, often prevents people from getting as far as I have. However, by giving people a second chance through the Clean Slate Legislation, we can make the pathway to professional job and more.

Given my history, I have been scrupulous in my dedication to educational and professional advancement. My past and current employers, the Michigan Board of Social Workers, the University of Michigan and other educational institutions found that their trust in my dedication and abilities was justified. I have excelled in coursework, clinical and administrative responsibilities, been approved licensure and credentialing appropriate to my experiences, and have a proven service record with clients who have mental health disorders and substance disorders.

The limitations I have experienced because of my past conduct are myriad. As a recovering provider, I believe that modeling is one of many effective means of engaging and assisting consumers.

Living evidence that past indiscretions, poor decisions and diagnostic labels do not prevent future successes is a boost to clients with co-occurring disorders. I am optimistic that with time, continued professional development and ethical conduct will reduce these barriers not only for me but for so many others looking to have a second chance at society.

Respectfully,
Tanisha Moir LMSW CAADC

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tanisha Moir', written in a cursive style.